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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Sambhal violence: Entry curbs on outsiders till 10 Dec

LUCKNOW/SAMBHAL, 30 NOV

Several Samajwadi Party lawmakers, including its Sambhal MP, were stopped from entering the violence-hit district, as the administration on Saturday extended the ban on the entry of outsiders and public representatives into Sambhal till 10 December to maintain "peace and order". The earlier prohibition on outsiders' entry was to expire on Saturday. It also demanded that government give Rs 25 lakh each to victims' families. *—PTI*

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PCB backs hybrid model if ICC applies it to India

KARACHI, 30 NOV

Backing down from its boycott threat, the Pakistan Cricket Board has told the ICC that it is willing to accept the 'Hybrid' model for hosting next year's Champions Trophy provided the world body allows the same arrangement for events to be held in India till 2031. A top PCB source told that the Board is also demanding a greater share in the annual revenue cycle for agreeing to the model under which India would be playing its shares. *—PTI*

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Cyclone 'Fengal' begins making landfall

1 dead, hospitals & houses inundated amid heavy rains

Roads and houses inundated with rainwater after heavy rainfall in Chennai, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

CHENNAI, 30 NOV

Cyclonic storm Fengal has commenced making landfall close to Puducherry and it may approximately take 4 hours for it to cross the coast completely, an India Meteorological Department official said here on Saturday.

Citing data and observations, IMD-Regional Meteorological Centre, Additional Director General, S Balachandran told PTI that the process of the cyclone's landfall commenced at about 5.30 pm on 30 November.

On the area of landfall, he said it was close to 'Puducherry area' and that it may take approximately 4 hours for the completion of the landfall process and added that more related information would be made available later.

Hospitals and houses were inundated in Chennai and its neighbourhoods on Saturday following Cyclone Fengal induced heavy downpour, as civic authorities said clearing works were on in a 'war-footing.'

Rainwater entered the premises of two state-run hospitals at Chromepet, a general hospital and a facility for thoracic medicine, both of which are located side by side and frequented by people.

In a rain-related incident, a migrant worker who tried to withdraw cash from an ATM here, was reportedly electrocuted.

Public transportation services were hit and people used flyovers and spaces beneath them as parking lots to avoid a repeat of 2015 floods. *—PTI*

PONDY GOVT ISSUES ALERT VIA SMS

Puducherry, 30 Nov

Puducherry experienced heavy rains on Saturday, prompting the union territory administration to send SMS alerts to around 12 lakh residents cautioning them to remain vigilant as cyclonic storm Fengal is expected to make landfall near here later in the day. Chief Minister N Rangasamy visited the rain-affected areas to review the steps taken by the Disaster Management department. Toll free numbers 112, 1077 and also WhatsApp number 94889 81070 have been put in place. *—PTI*

Stranded passengers at Chennai airport *PHOTO: PTI*

CHENNAI AIRPORT SHUTS OPERATIONS, FLIGHTS DISRUPTED

CHENNAI, 30 NOV

Chennai airport on Friday announced suspension of operations till 4 am on 1 December following heavy inundation of runways and the taxiway, due to the cyclone 'Fengal' triggered rains and the 'adverse weather condition,' with over 50 flights being cancelled and scores of passengers left in the lurch. Official sources here said the two runways and the taxiway were inundated and as many as 55 flights were cancelled and 19 others diverted, adding, the services include both domestic and international operations. Earlier in the day, when the airport was operational, at least 12 flights were delayed.

The Chennai airport in a post on 'X' said that a team of senior officials was closely monitoring the situation to facilitate the earliest resumption of operations as meteorological conditions improve.

The complete disruption of services left the passengers in a lurch and according to ballpark estimates from official sources, over 10,000 people could have been affected due to cancellations and diversions. While the services were hit, nearly 1,000 passengers continued to stay back inside the airport premises to take the first available flight from here to their respective destinations. *—PTI*

Two more Hindu priests arrested in B'desh: ISKCON

KOLKATA, 30 NOV

Two more Hindu priests were arrested in Bangladesh, ISKCON Kolkata spokesperson Radharamn Das claimed on Saturday.

Speaking to PTI, Radharamn said, "I have received information that two more ISKCON monks have been arrested by police in Bangladesh."

In a post on X on Friday night, Radharamn said, "In the meantime, bad news has come: two devotees who went with prasad for Chinmaya Prabhu were arrested on their way back to the temple, and Chinmaya prabhu's secretary is also missing. Please pray for them."

PHOTO: X

Earlier on Friday, Radharamn had posted, "Another Brahmachari, Sri Shyam Das Prabhu, was arrested by Chattogram Police."

"Does he look like a terrorist? #FreeISKCONMonks Bangladesh. The arrest of innocent #ISKCON brahmacharis are deeply shocking & disturbing," Radharamn posted on X on Saturday. His comments comes comes in the backdrop of unconfirmed reports of arrest of three more ISKCON monks, days after the arrest of spiritual leader Chinmay Das.

Chinmay Das, who also served as a spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Monday while en route to Chattogram to attend a rally. *—PTI*

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Tripura hospital bars patients from Bangladesh

AGARTALA, 30 NOV

A multi-specialty private hospital in Agartala on Saturday decided to suspend treatment of Bangladeshi nationals following pressure from a group of protesters. The ILS Hospital has been a popular destination for patients from the neighbouring country due to its proximity and affordable treatment costs. The hospital's chief operating officer, Gautam Hazarika, confirmed the decision, saying, "We extend full support to the demand of suspension of treatment to people from Bangladesh at our health facility. Our help desks at Akhaura check post and ILS hospitals have been closed down from today onwards." Hazarika's remarks came in response to a group of people who had staged a protest at the hospital, demanding that the facility stop providing medical services to Bangladeshi citizens, citing disrespect towards the Indian flag and growing concerns over the treatment of Hindus in the neighbouring country. *—PTI*

'NAMMA JATHRE'

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, and other dignitaries inaugurated 'Namma Jathre,' a highlight of the two-day "Bengaluru Habba" festival, held in front of Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Mahayuti to form govt on 5 Dec

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

The new Mahayuti government in Maharashtra is set to be sworn in on 5 December at Azad Maidan, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in attendance, as announced by the state BJP on Saturday. While the chief ministerial candidate has yet to be officially revealed, sources suggest Devendra Fadnavis, a former chief minister and deputy CM in the previous Eknath Shinde-led government, is the frontrunner for the role.

Devendra Fadnavis *PHOTO: PTI*

Shinde, currently serving as caretaker chief minister, has reportedly taken ill, experiencing a high fever, and retreated to his native village amidst speculation regarding his dissatisfaction with the new government's formation. Shiv Sena leader Shambhuraj Desai noted that Shinde and other party leaders returned from a meeting with senior BJP officials in Delhi, after which Shinde fell unwell.

Tensions within the alliances have emerged, particularly regarding Shinde's position. *—PTI*

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ISS MISSION: INDIAN CREW FINISHES INITIAL TRAINING

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

Two Indian astronauts chosen for the upcoming Axiom-4 mission to International Space Station (ISS) have completed the initial phase of training, ISRO has said.

For the ISRO-NASA joint effort to ISS, the two Gaganyatris (Prime-Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and Backup-Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair) assigned for Axiom Mission 4 commenced their training in the USA from first week of August 2024, according to ISRO.

During the initial phase of training, the Gaganyatris have completed initial orientations for mission-related ground facility tours, initial overview of mission launch phases, SpaceX suit fit checks and selected space food options, it said.

The training also included familiarisation sessions with SpaceX Dragon spacecraft and onboard systems of ISS, including photography from space, daily operations routine and communication protocols. *—PTI*

TRASH TROUBLE

Brand Bengaluru - A promise lost in unending garbage woes

HAMEED ASHRAF
BENGALURU, 30 NOV

When the Congress government came to power in 2023, it promised to transform Bengaluru into a world-class city with its ambitious 'Brand Bengaluru', aiming to rival global metropolises like London. However, over a year later, the City grapples with a mounting garbage crisis. Street corners have become dumping grounds, with trash spilling onto footpaths, drainage systems, and even near transformers. Overflowing bins, littered streets and polluted lakes are common sights.

Bengaluru, with a population of 1.3 crore and home to 29 lakh households, generates over 6,000 tonnes of waste daily—doubling during festive seasons. Less than 60 per cent is collected by Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) waste workers and only around 15 per cent is processed, with the rest dumped into landfills. According to BBMP, Bengaluru Urban alone produces 4,593 tonnes of waste daily but only 1,943.8 tonnes is processed.

SALAR 360

Funds and efforts fall short

In 2022, the State allocated Rs 8,409 crore for waste management. However, BBMP has struggled with poor planning and staff shortages.

LACK OF RESOURCES

BBMP RESOURCES	RESOURCES DEPLOYED	RESOURCES NEEDED
Pourakarmikas	18,500	*
Landfills	7	3
Waste processing units	6	*
Bio-methanation plants	13	200
Dry waste collection centres	164	34

* Data not available

BBMP employs 18,500 pourakarmikas, sanitation workers who are on the frontline in waste management but overburdened. BBMP deploys one worker for every 700 residents, covering at least 550m in an eight-hour shift. Pourakarmikas say one worker is needed for 500 residents.

Despite a fleet of 4,646 auto tippers, 593 compactors and 27 mechanical sweepers, these efforts are insufficient for the scale of waste generated.

Waste-processing units outdated

Bengaluru has seven landfills and six waste-processing units, none of which have been upgraded to address City's growing garbage intake in a decade. Two of the landfills are out of use due to legal issues and the City requires three more. There are just 13 bio-methanation plants, each with a 65-tonne processing capacity and a single sanitary landfill with a 3,000-tonne capacity. In 2023, BBMP planned to install 200 bio-methanation plants but no progress has been made so far.

Speaking to **Salar News**, BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath said these problems have been there for a long time due to various reasons and cannot be solved overnight. "The civic agency has to face tremendous challenges including unorganised neighbourhoods, poor accountability, budget constraints, lack of public awareness, lack of political will. *—Salar News*

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UNSORTED TRASH TALES

Poor waste segregation compound Bengaluru's garbage crisis, reports Hameed Ashraf

Bengaluru, the tech capital of India, has been facing garbage crisis for a long time. Inconsistent waste segregation practices have made the crisis compounding, and many areas in the City have been left high and dry due to this.

Despite citizens' efforts to segregate their waste, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) workers allegedly mix it all together once collected.

"We segregate waste diligently, but the collectors dump it all together in the truck," Anupama Shetty, a college professor from Yelahanka told **Salar News**. "What's the point of segregation if BBMP doesn't follow it?" she asked.

Dry waste collection centres, which sort and recycle waste, are in short supply. There are only 164 centres, even though the City needs at least 198.

SOUTH ZONE: THE BIGGEST WASTE GENERATOR

According to BBMP, across the City's eight zones — East, West, South, Yelahanka, Bommanahalli, Mahadevapura, RR Nagar and Dasarahalli — maximum waste is generated from the South, followed by East and West; the least waste generation is from Dasarahalli.

The South Zone, home to the City's largest population of 30 lakh, generates over 1,000 tonnes of waste daily. Among the most waste-generating areas in this zone is BTM Layout, which alone produces close to 300 tonnes of waste, followed by Chickpet, Byatarayanapura, Chamarajpet, and Bommanahalli.

While many upscale neighbourhoods are adopting segregation, slums and unregulated areas lag. "Segregation rates in South Zone hover around 50 per cent. The challenge is to bring informal settlements into the formal waste collection system," Rajesh Kumar, Health Inspector, South Zone told **Salar News**.

WEST ZONE: MARKET AREAS STRUGGLE TO MANAGE LOAD

The West Zone generates 700 tonnes of waste daily, dominated by wet waste from the KR Market. Shivanna, a vegetable trader at KR Market, told **Salar News** that the market is a mess after 11 am daily.

"BBMP workers collect waste in the morning but by noon, it's back to square one. We're constantly surrounded by flies and foul smells," he said.

Rukmini K, Joint Health Officer for West Zone, claimed that the only way to solve the issue is via public awareness.

Rapid urbanisation in RR Nagar led to an increase in waste generation, now at 600 tonnes daily. Segregation remains a concern in these newly developed areas. Manjunath MS, a resident of Nayandahalli, said, "Due to inefficient garbage collection, residents have started using the stretch to discard their garbage."

EAST ZONE: A HOTSPOT FOR COMMERCIAL WASTE

The East Zone, known for its commercial hubs such as Whitefield, Marathahalli and Indiranagar, generates about 800 tonnes of waste daily. A large portion of this waste comes from offices, malls and eateries, with mixed waste being a big challenge.

BBMP Assistant Executive Engineer Anand Reddy said, "Corporate entities have embraced waste segregation better than many residential areas."

Daily per capita waste generated from residential houses is pegged at 309g and from slums it is 300g. According to BBMP, 58.5 per cent of the waste generated is from households, 49.7 per cent from commercial establishments and 6.8 per cent from street sweeping.

NORTH ZONE: RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL AREAS IN EQUAL MEASURE

The North Zone, which includes commercial and residential areas such as KR Puram, Byatarayanapura, Yeshwanthapur, Dasarahalli, Mahalakshmi Layout, Malleshwaram, Hebbal and Pulakeshinagar, generates approximately 600 to 800 tonnes of waste per day.

A senior engineer from the BBMP's Solid Waste Management team, on the condition of anonymity, said, "The garbage problem persists due to poor transparency and accountability in the system."

BACK-TO-BACK ROADBLOCKS FOR BBMP

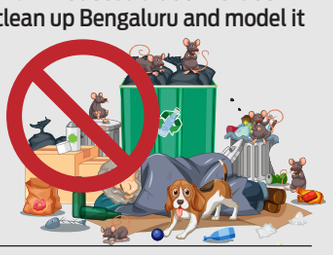
In 2023, BBMP floated 89 tenders for door-to-door garbage collection in 243 wards, at Rs 590 crore per year. It was put on hold indefinitely after the tenders' faced allegations of collusion among bidders, and the BBMP Garbage Contractors' Association blamed the BBMP for fixing low rates to help bidders.

This September, the government decided to send nearly half of the City's garbage to Doddaballapur, Bidadi, Mandur and Gollahalli. However, this was scrapped after protests from residents and local MLAs.

A major issue contributing to the poor garbage management is the lack of BBMP elections, which have not been held since 2020. This has led to infighting and a lack of accountability, with officials blaming each other for the garbage mess.

SM KRISHNA'S SINGAPORE DREAM

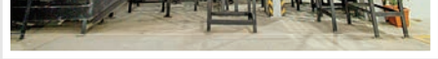
Bengaluru has long sought solutions to its growing garbage problem. In 2000, then chief minister SM Krishna introduced a door-to-door garbage collection system, hoping to clean up Bengaluru and model it after the swanky Singapore. At the time, there was far less plastic packaging and waste generation was relatively low. However, as the City expanded, the waste challenge grew exponentially.



WHERE ARE THE DUSTBINS?

In 2017, BBMP acknowledged the failure of the door-to-door collection system, particularly in commercial and slum areas. Hence, it reintroduced garbage bins for segregating dry and wet waste for Rs 4 crore. Unfortunately, the City suffers from a dearth of dustbins.

A BBMP official told **Salar News**, "The dry and wet waste bins were introduced but are not in use in most places. This is because the City has been struggling with waste management for years."



The Automated Waste Segregation Machine established in Chamarajpet division was launched on 28 November *PHOTO: BBMP*

THE WAY FORWARD

BBMP Chief Tushar Girinath told **Salar News** that the civic agency is aiming to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills by introducing new waste processing facilities, including a waste-to-energy plant in Bidadi. This facility is expected to handle 600 tonnes of waste daily and generate 11.5 megawatts of power, he said.

BBMP proposed an increase in the solid waste management cess earlier this year. The proposal suggests raising monthly cess for households from Rs 30-50 to Rs 100.

BBMP has also submitted a proposal to the government to impose a cess of Rs 12 per kg of waste on bulk generators, such as apartments, hotels and malls.

Overworked, underpaid, unprotected: Unsung pourakarmikas have it rough

Bengaluru's garbage management system relies heavily on dedicated but overburdened pourakarmikas. These unsung heroes are the backbone of the City's cleanliness efforts but their relentless work comes at a steep cost: severe staff shortages, health complications and a lack of resources that often leave them exhausted and unheard. **HAMEED ASHRAF** documents their plight

THEY NEED JOB SECURITY

BBMP oversees the City's waste management but it has long struggled with a shortage of pourakarmikas. BBMP deploys one worker for every 700 residents, covering at least 550m in an eight-hour shift.

Meena, a pourakarmika from West Zone, told **Salar News**, "On paper, there are 20 workers in our ward. But in reality, only 12 of us are here. We are expected to cover three times the area we used to."

Raju, another pourakarmika from East Zone, said his working hours stretch from early morning until late evening. "We lift heavy bins, walk for miles, and still get yelled at by residents if the garbage isn't cleared on time," he said.

Contract-based workers, such as Kumar, who have been with the BBMP for five years, live without job security and with a salary of Rs 12,000 to 17,000. "We don't have medical insurance, and if we fall sick, we lose wages," he said.

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath blamed administrative delays and budget constraints for the shortage. "We are increasing their numbers. We've also introduced mechanised waste collection vehicles to reduce their workload, but the transition takes time," he said.

YOUR DIRT, THEIR BARE HANDS

Next time you dispose of used diapers and uneaten food without proper packaging, think about the pourakarmikas who clean your rubbish with their bare hands as BBMP and contractors fail to provide them with necessary protective gear, such as gloves and masks. As a result of which, many suffer from respiratory problems, skin infections and debilitating back pain.

Radha, a 58-year-old pourakarmika from South Zone, said that they are not provided with any safety kits. "During the pandemic, we were given thin gloves that tore easily, and masks weren't regularly provided. We are exposed to harmful chemicals and rotting garbage every day," she added.

Health issues are rampant among these workers, with 88 per cent reporting recurring problems, ranging from chest pain to breathing difficulties.

In 2023, the State government cancelled a Rs 15 crore fund earmarked for uniforms and safety equipment for sanitation workers.

"By halting the designated funds, the government has risked their lives. All waste workers, including contract workers, must be covered by Employees' State Insurance (ESI) and provided with the safety equipment they need," said Maitreyi Krishnan from All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU).

Girinath told **Salar News** that most of the workers are contract-based and that contractors do not provide protective gear to cut costs.

"BBMP has limited enforcement power over all contract workers," he added.

"To improve the safety and working conditions of pourakarmikas, the BBMP has launched comprehensive health screenings, including cancer tests. A few NGOs have also come forward to monitor the regular and effective distribution of personal protective equipment," the BBMP Chief said.

PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD, HAMEED ASHRAF, DESIGN: G VISHWANATHA

Over 100g MDMA seized in Ullal, four arrested

MANGALURU, 30 NOV

Four people were arrested in connection with the alleged possession and sale of MDMA following raids in Ullal, on Saturday, police said. In the initial operation on 25 November, three suspects were apprehended. Authorities seized 50 grams of MDMA, a car, three mobile phones, and Rs 7.76 lakh in cash. A case was registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at Ullal police station. In a follow-up operation, police detained one more person from Ullal, who was found with 53 grams of MDMA, Rs 7.76 lakh in cash, two mobile phones, and a car. The total seizure now stands at 103 grams of MDMA and valuables worth Rs 15.52 lakh. Investigations are underway to trace others linked to the drug network, police said. *—PTI*

Journalist attacked for helping filing of complaint

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

A 34-year-old journalist, Ravi, was allegedly attacked with a machete in Yellukunte on 29 November, for aiding a family in filing a police complaint. Around 6:25 PM, Ravi received a call from a man, Manjunath, who asked to meet him near an Ambedkar statue. Upon arrival, Manjunath confronted Ravi, accusing him of involving the police against him and his accomplices. When Ravi tried to flee, the assailant chased and assaulted him. A passerby raised an alarm, drawing residents to the scene, prompting Manjunath to escape in a car. Ravi was hospitalized, and a complaint has been filed with the HSR Layout police. A search is underway to apprehend the accused *—Salar News*

Assaulted by wife's paramour, driver dies

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

A goods vehicle driver succumbed to his injuries on Saturday after he was allegedly assaulted by two men in Byadarahalli police station limits here. Police arrested Karthik, 27, and his friend Chetan Kumar, 33, in the death of Abhishek. Tensions began when Abhishek suspected his wife of having an affair with Karthik, who also worked as a goods vehicle driver and lived in the same locality, police told Salar News. The suspicions stemmed from frequent and lengthy phone conversations between Karthik and Abhishek's wife. On 27 November, Abhishek, accompanied by his younger brother Avinash, warned Karthik to cease communication with his wife. Karthik called Chetan, and the duo attacked the brothers. "Karthik used his metal bracelet to strike Abhishek repeatedly on the head," a police official said. Both brothers were taken to Victoria Hospital, where Abhishek succumbed to his injuries. *—Salar News*

Actor, director summoned over drone damage

BENGALURU 30 NOV

Magadi Road police have issued a notice to actor Zaid Khan, son of Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan, and film director Anil after a drone technician complained that his equipment was damaged during a film shooting.In his complaint to police, Santosh accused the actor and the director of pressuring him to execute a challenging shot while shooting for a movie in Chitradurga district, leading to the damage of his drone, valued at Rs 25 lakh. The drone had crashed into a wind fan at the shooting location on 25 November.Santosh said he had approached Zaid and Anil on multiple occasions requesting financial aid to repair the drone but they refused to help him. Depressed over the incident, he allegedly attempted suicide at his home, Santosh claimed. *—Salar News*

Maternal deaths in Ballari: Siddaramaiah orders inquiry

Drugs controller suspended, pharma company blacklisted

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

Taking the recent maternal deaths in Ballari district seriously, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday ordered an inquiry into such incidents at various hospitals of the State and announced compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the victims' family.

Amid concerns that the maternal deaths could be linked to substandard Ringer Lactate solution that is administered intravenously to restore hydration and fluid balance in the body, he ordered suspension of the drugs controller and blacklisting of Paschim Banga Pharmaceutical that supplied the solution and also to prosecute the company.

The CM on Saturday chaired a high-level meeting regarding the maternal deaths in Ballari. Four women have died this month in the district.

"It should be ensured that the company pays compensation to the victims," Siddaramaiah said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah chairs a high-level meeting regarding the maternal deaths in Ballari, in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: X*

"I have also directed to issue a notice to Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (KSMSCL) Managing Director for a departmental inquiry. It has also been decided to form an expert committee under the chairmanship of the Development Commissioner to investigate such deaths that have occurred in various hospitals in the State, and to submit a report in seven days," he added.

The health department's officials said a sudden spurt in maternal deaths was reported from the Ballari district hospital between 9 and 11 November.

The deaths were reported to have occurred following caesarean operations at the hospital. Of the 34 caesarean operations performed in those three days, seven cases developed complications.

Out of the seven patients who developed complications such as acute kidney injury requiring haemodialysis and multi-organ dysfunction, four died, they said, adding that two have been discharged from the hospital and one patient is recovering at Vijayanagar Institute of Medical Sciences, Ballari.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said the use of Ringer Lactate solution has been suspended in all government hospitals as a precautionary measure.

Accusing the Siddaramaiah-led government of "hiding" the actual maternal death figures, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje demanded an inquiry and action against Minister Rao. *—PTI*

SWAMIJI BOOKED

Seer's statement on Muslim voting right is wrong, says DKS

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

Terming Chandrashekarnatha Swamiji's statement that voting rights of Muslims must be snatched as wrong, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday lashed out at Leader of Opposition R Ashoka for not raising his voice when JD (S) leader Channigappa filed a case against Balagangadharanath Swamiji.

He said, "The swamiji has apologised for his statement on Muslim voting rights. I am happy about it. Everyone has voting rights in a democracy, caste and religion must not be brought into this. When ex-minister Channigappa had filed a case against Balagangadharanath Swamiji and made him run around to courts, where was Ashoka? He had not done anything wrong, yet they pursued the case. Law is the same to everyone. Ashoka is playing with fire, the Vokkaliga community will not forgive him."

DK Shivakumar *PHOTO: PTI*

HDK warns of anarchy

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Saturday warned of "anarchy" in the State in the days ahead, as he hit out at the Congress government in Karnataka for registering a case against the Vokkaliga math seer.

The JD(S) leader also questioned the administration's quick action against the seer, while no action had been taken against a minister who made "racist" comments against him. *—PTI*

SIX YEARS

Congress expels party leader over sexual harassment case

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

Congress leader B Gurappa Naidu, who has been booked for alleged sexual harassment and outraging the modesty of a woman, was on Saturday expelled from the primary membership of the party for a period of six years.

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), disciplinary action committee Chairman K Rahman Khan announced Naidu's expulsion from the party through a press release.

Sexual harassment case registered against him has been citied as the reason for the move.

B Gurappa Naidu *PHOTO: FB*

Naidu, who is also the General Secretary of KPCC, has been booked under IPC Sections 354A (sexual harassment), 506 (criminal intimidation), 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty).

The FIR was registered on 26 November, based on the complaint by a 38-year-old woman, who worked as a teacher at a school where the suspect is the Chairman.

—PTI

TRADITION IN COLOURS

Around 122 women participated in a Rangoli competition organised by Cubbon Park Walkers' Association, in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

MUDA approves 300 new layouts

MYSURU, 30 NOV

Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) gave approval on Saturday for constructing 300 layouts in City amid enquiries by Lokayukta, Enforcement Directorate and a single-judge enquiry commission into a scam at the authority.

Mysuru Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy, who is also MUDA Chairman, chaired a meeting of its board of directors in the City and gave approval. This is the second meeting of the MUDA board in three weeks.

BJP MLA TS Srivatsa said the approval for the 300 layouts was given without any discussion as applications for them were pending for one year.

The meeting also decided to withdraw the distribution of sites under 50:50 scheme after the submission of PN Desai Commission's report to the State government.

MUDA is facing probes by Lokayukta, ED and a single-judge enquiry commission over a site allotment scam *PHOTO: PTI*

MUDA member and Chamaraja Congress MLA K Harishgowda said issues related to collecting the details of 4,850 sites distributed under 50:50 scheme, both legally and illegally, by MUDA officials between 2020 and 2024 were also discussed at the meeting.

The meeting also cleared the transfer of 240 layouts developed by MUDA to other urban local bodies such as Hootagalli CMC, Bogadi, Srirampur, Kadakola, Rammanahali town panchayats. The transfer of the remaining 700 layouts will be taken up at the next MUDA board meeting in December.

—Salar News

'Media should be beacon of truth'

BENGALURU 30 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said media must uphold its integrity and stand as a beacon of truth amid a sea of misleading narratives on Saturday.

Addressing the "Odugara Samavesha" (Reader's Conference), organised by Eedina, a media house, at Townhall, he encouraged outlets like Eedina to continue their commitment to fearless and accurate reporting and emphasised the media's crucial responsibility to serve as the fourth pillar of democracy.

A special edition book, which focuses on the State's socio-political landscape and the challenges faced by the media industry, was unveiled during the event.

Seema Chishti, Editor of The Wire, highlighted the importance of fearless journalism in effecting social change. She lauded initiatives like Khabar Lahariya and Chambal Media for empowering local women in villages to become reporters, thereby giving a voice to marginalised communities and fostering grassroots change.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with writers during Reader's Conference held at Town Hall in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: SALAR*

Reflecting on State's achievements over the past 50 years, Professor A Narayana from Azim Premji University highlighted the transformative policies introduced by former chief minister D Devaraj Urs, whose tenure was marked by significant social and economic reforms

—Salar News

'Spread awareness on NHM schemes'

MYSURU, 30 NOV

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer KM Gayathri has directed Health Department officials to spread awareness among the people about using facilities under National Health Mission (NHM) programmes in Mysuru district.

During a review meeting in the city on Saturday, Gayathri asked the officials to complete all NHM programmes by the end of December this year. She also asked the officials to focus on the prevention of the mortality rate of both children and women in the district.

The ZP CEO also reviewed the economic and physical programmes achieved by District Health and Family Welfare Society and District Early Intervention Centre across the district

—Salar News

Ex-minister to sue IAS officer Sindhuri in graft case

MYSURU, 30 NOV

Former minister SR Mahesh on Saturday said he would sue corruption-tainted IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri, who is accused of misusing government funds and facing corruption charges, if the Congress government fails to take stern action against her.

He stated that the previous BJP-Congress government failed to initiate action against the officer, although various charges being levelled against her and were proven in a court.

He also accused the IAS officers' lobby of protecting Sindhuri. He said he would drag her to court if the State government continued to neglect initiating action against her.

He also noted that the allegations against him by the IAS officer had been quashed in a court of law. Referring to various investigation reports that found the officer guilty causing financial losses to the government, he urged the government to stop protecting her and take appropriate action.

Mahesh accused the officer of looting crores of rupees by inflating bills for cloth bags purchased by local bodies when she was serving as Deputy Commissioner in Mysuru. The officer is also alleged to be responsible for the deaths of 32 people at the Chamarajanagar district hospital due to oxygen shortages during the pandemic.

—Salar News

CLOWN FESTIVAL

Clowns leave Bengaluru in splits

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

Seven-year-old Leyla wasn't the only one in stitches at the clowns' antics. Her initially reluctant parents—a techie couple from Bengaluru—soon found themselves laughing uncontrollably as the performers mocked each other with exaggerated physical comedy that rendered dialogue unnecessary.

For nearly two hours, 25 clowns from as far away as Belgium and Mexico juggled, unicycled, mimed and backslapped through skits. With their signature red noses firmly in place, they sniffled, giggled, and entertained the crowd with carefully crafted acts that often ended with a playful "moral of the story" aimed at the children.

The shows are held at Ambedkar Bhavan in Vasanth Nagar, with three performances daily — at 11am, 3pm and 7pm — until 1 December *PHOTO: X*

This spectacle unfolded as part of the 10th edition of International Clown Festival, now lighting up Bengaluru.

For 55-year-old Martin D'Souza, the mastermind behind the clown festival that has been reshaping perceptions of clowns for the past decade, the true reward lies in the "aha" moment when people realise clowning is far more than just telling silly jokes.

This realisation, D'Souza says, kept him motivated through the early challenges of organising such a unique event.

"I thought clowns were just people in jumpsuits with painted faces, cracking silly jokes. That perception shifted entirely when I attended 'clown school'," D'Souza told PTI. He attended a one-week camp at the University of Wisconsin in the United States. *—PTI*

Yatnal took money from Cong to weaken BJP: MP

MYSURU, 30 NOV

BJP MP Renukacharya on Saturday accused former Union minister Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and his supporters of taking money from Congress to weaken the party.

He said Yatnal skipped the Mysuru padayatra from Bengaluru held against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in solidarity with Congress..

Yatnal is blackmailing the BJP leaders, troubling BS Yediyurappa right from the beginning and now is also targeting his son State BJP president BY Vijayendra.

He further said that he has been receiving threatening calls since he started criticising Yatnal two days ago.

Basanagouda Patil Yatnal *PHOTO: PTI*

He said the State BJP will hold a huge convention in Davangere to express support for BY Vijayendra and demand the expulsion of Yatnal.

Around three lakh BJP activists are expected to take part in the convention, Renukacharya added.

He also attributed the defeat of the party's candidates in the three bypolls in the State to Yatnal and his group.

—Salar News

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

FIR filed against Actor Sharad for 'misbehaviour'

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

A case has been registered against Bollywood actor Sharad Kapoor for allegedly misbehaving with a woman and touching her inappropriately at his house in the western suburbs here, police said on Saturday. The alleged incident occurred at the actor's residence in Khar earlier this week, an official said. The 32-year-old woman, in her complaint, has alleged that Kapoor invited her to his house on the pretext of discussing a film shoot. He called her into his bedroom, behaved inappropriately and forcibly touched her, the official said. He also allegedly sent the woman a message on WhatsApp using foul language after their meeting, he said. The official said the woman claimed that she came in contact with the actor on Facebook and later communicated with him through video calls. —*PTI*

Maoist killed in encounter with Jharkhand police

CHAIBASA, 30 NOV

A Maoist was killed in an encounter with police in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Saturday, a senior officer said. The encounter took place in Tomrong village, located within Tebo police station limits, he added. The deceased was identified as People's Liberation Front of India area commander Lamboo, SP Ashutosh Shekhar said. The details of the incident are still being gathered, and further actions by police are underway, the SP added. —*PTI*

UP's Jodhpur Jhal wetland to become bird sanctuary

MATHURA, 30 NOV

Jodhpur Jhal, a wetland spread over 64 hectares in the Koh village of Mathura's Farah block, is being transformed into a bird sanctuary, officials said. Located just eight kilometres from the Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary in Agra and 35 kilometres from the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, the wetland is expected to become a significant attraction for bird watchers and tourists, they said. Efforts are being made to develop Jodhpur Jhal as a bird sanctuary to attract tourists visiting Mathura and Agra, they said. The sanctuary will feature seven water bodies, 13 islands, and a 2,200-metre nature trail with 13 huts for visitors to rest. Ecotourism facilities such as watchtowers, a biodiversity study centre, seminar halls, parking spaces, canteens, and toilets are also being developed, the officials said. —*PTI*

Clash erupts over construction at factory in Noida

NOIDA, 30 NOV

A clash broke out between two groups over construction work underway at a factory in Noida , police said on Saturday. The incident took place on Friday night when Sub-Inspector Yashpal Sharma was patrolling near Maycha village, Dadri Station House Officer (SHO) Arvind Kumar said. Sharma received information about the brawl, where some people were attacking each other with sticks and iron rods, the SHO said. According to Kumar, one group was opposing the construction work at a company. He added that there were also reports of gunfire during the incident. Based on the sub-inspector's complaint, a case has been registered against 45 people under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including attempt to murder and rioting, Kumar said. —*PTI*

Entry restrictions in Sambhal extended till 10 December

Meanwhile, SP lawmakers were stopped from visiting Sambhal

LUCKNOW/SAMBHAL, 30 NOV

Several Samajwadi Party lawmakers, including its Sambhal MP, were stopped from entering the violence-hit district, as the administration on Saturday extended the ban on the entry of outsiders and public representatives into Sambhal till 10 December to maintain "peace and order".

The earlier prohibition on outsiders' entry was to expire on Saturday.

The Samajwadi Party's Muzaffarnagar MP Harendra Malik was stopped from entering Sambhal from Ghaziabad.

"I don't understand why we are being stopped. Are the opposition leader and the MPs so irresponsible that they can't be allowed to move within the state?" Malik asked.

The party had announced a 15-member delegation would visit the district to gather information about the violence that broke out over a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid.

Security personnel deployed outside the residence of LoP in Uttar Pradesh Assembly Mata Prasad Pandey PHOTO: PTI

Curbs under Section 163 (power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) of the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, set to expire on Sunday, were extended till 31 December.

Tension had been brewing in Sambhal since 19 November when the court-ordered survey of the Mughal-era mosque was carried out following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site.

Violence erupted during a second survey on 24 November as protesters gathered near the mosque and clashed with security personnel. Four people died and several others were injured in the clashes. The police have denied allegations that it fired at the protesters.

The Supreme Court has since ordered the Sambhal court to halt proceedings in the case and its survey.

In Moradabad, Samajwadi Party MP Ruchi Veera's residence was surrounded by cops to prevent her from travelling to Sambhal. Heavy security has been deployed outside Pandey's residence since Friday. In a poston X, the SP said the government deploying police at the homes of leaders included in the delegation and preventing them from travelling to Sambhal was "reprehensible". —*PTI*

'WAQF PROPERTY'

Sunni board's claim on Udai Pratap college sparks row

VARANASI, 30 NOV

Udai Pratap College in Varanasi is engulfed in controversy following claims by the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board that a mosque located on the campus and its surrounding land constitutes Waqf property. The college administration has vehemently denied these allegations.

The Waqf Board issued a notice in 2018, asserting that the mosque and the adjacent land were gifted to them by the Nawab of Tonk. Principal DK Singh stated that the then secretary of the college responded to the notice, asserting that the mosque was built illegally and that the college property belongs to a trust that cannot be sold or transferred.

Singh added that the Waqf Board attempted to carry out construction around the mosque in 2022, but the college administration intervened,

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

resulting in police action to halt the work.

Manaur Rahman, a frequent visitor to the mosque, countered the college's claims, insisting that the mosque is the rightful property of the Nawab of Tonk and asserting that the college had previously agreed to provide the mosque with electricity.

He contended that there is no genuine dispute, describing the current tensions as unnecessary —*PTI*

A view of businessman Raj Kundras residence at Juhu after ED raids as part of a money laundering case PHOTO: PTI

ED raids: Raj Kundra calls for media restraint

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Businessman Raj Kundra has urged the media to "respect boundaries" and refrain from involving his wife, actor Shilpa Shetty, in "unrelated matters," following recent raids by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The raids, part of a money laundering investigation linked to the alleged distribution of pornographic and adult films, targeted Kundra's premises and those of several associates.

In his first public statement after the raids, shared via an Instagram Story, Kundra asserted his full cooperation with the investigation, which has been ongoing for four years. He commented, "No amount of sensationalism will cloud the truth. In the end, justice will prevail!" He expressed frustration over media narratives suggesting wrongdoing involving Shetty.

The actress, who married Kundra in 2009, has not yet commented on the situation. Prior to this, Shetty's lawyer, Prashant Patil, clarified that the investigation was not targeted at her and confirmed Kundra's cooperation aimed at uncovering the truth. The case, emerging from at least two FIRs filed by the Mumbai police, follows a previous case against Kundra, in which he and others were arrested and later granted bail. Earlier this year, the ED attached assets worth Rs 98 crore belonging to Kundra and Shetty in a cryptocurrency-related case. —*PTI*

- The case, emerging from at least two FIRs filed by the Mumbai police, follows a previous case against Kundra, in which he and others were arrested and later granted bail

SC VERDICTS

SC criticises HC orders on trial timelines

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The Supreme Court has condemned high court directives mandating time-bound trials in bail rejection cases, stating that such orders are often impractical and mislead litigants. Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih voiced concerns regarding how these timelines adversely impact trial court operations, particularly when older cases remain unresolved.

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court granted bail to an individual who had been jailed for two and a half years for alleged counterfeit currency offences, highlighting that the trial was unlikely to conclude in a reasonable timeframe. The court asserted the principle that "bail is the rule, jail is the exception," stressing that prolonged detention without trial warrants releasing the accused on bail.

PHOTO: PTI

In its order, the Supreme Court has instructed the registry to circulate the ruling among the high courts' registrar generals, ensuring adherence to established legal principles.

The appellant is to be presented before the trial court within a week for bail formalities pending trial resolution. —*PTI*

SC seeks balance in State vs Centre row over investigation

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The Supreme Court of India underscored the necessity of balancing jurisdictional powers in cases where state police investigate officers from central agencies. This statement came during a hearing on a petition from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seeking to transfer the investigation of its officer Ankit Tiwari, arrested by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) for alleged bribery.

The bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan expressed concern that arbitrary state arrests of central officials could lead to a constitutional crisis and disrupt the federal structure. The justices acknowledged that while fair investigation is a right of the accused, limiting state police powers in their jurisdiction would be equally undesirable.

Counsel for Tamil Nadu noted that Tiwari was apprehended while accepting a bribe of Rs 20 lakh, with the iprobe nearly complete. The matter has been adjourned for further hearing in January. The court previously indicated its intention to establish a transparent pan-India mechanism for handling cases involving central agency officials. —*PTI*

Allahabad HC summons top cop in contempt case

PRAYAGRAJ, 30 NOV

The Allahabad High Court has summoned Prayagraj Police Commissioner Tarun Gauba and other officers to appear on 10 December regarding a contempt petition filed by Balram Yadav. Yadav alleges that an FIR was not lodged against Arpit, a local MLA's representative, following an attack that resulted in his father's death on 25 September, due to political pressure.

Delhi HC seeks report on AHF injections supply

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The Delhi High Court has instructed both the Central and Delhi governments to submit status reports regarding the availability of Antihemophilic Factor (AHF) injections, essential for individuals with haemophilia, a rare genetic blood disorder. Petitioners highlighted that while government facilities offer haemophilia treatment, shortages of AHF injections pose a risk.

Over 150 two-wheelers were destroyed in a fire that broke out at a parking stand in Varanasi's Cantt railway station. There were no reports of any casualties. The incident took place on Friday night when the fire erupted near the platform one parking stand, according to railway officials. PHOTO: PTI

Farmer leader Dallewall begins hunger strike

CHANDIGARH, 30 NOV

A day after he was discharged from a Ludhiana hospital, Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Saturday sat on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border point to press for the acceptance of farmers' demands.

Dallewal replaced Sukhjit Singh Hardojhande, who on Saturday ended his fast-unto-death, which he began on 26 November.

The decision to end Sukhjit's fast was taken in a meeting of farmer leaders at the border

Jagjit Singh Dallewal PHOTO: PTI

point.

Hours before beginning his fast-unto-death on November 26, Dallewal was allegedly forcibly removed from the Khanauri border and taken to a hospital in Ludhiana. He was discharged on Friday evening.

Addressing the media at the Khanauri border on Saturday, farmer leader Baldev Singh Sirsa said Sukhjit was requested to suspend his hunger strike as Dallewal has returned to the protest site where he sat on the fast-unto-death.

He said initially, Dallewal was supposed to sit on the fast but the Punjab Police removed him from the protest site, following which Sukhjit observed the hunger strike. —*PTI*

FROM 7 DECEMBER

Rainbow Lit Fest to celebrate inclusivity

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Discussions, performances, and cultural exchange around the themes of love, gender identity, and inclusivity will take the centre stage at the upcoming Rainbow Lit Fest here.

Starting from 7 December at Gulmohar Park Club, the 'Queer and Inclusivity' festival will feature more than 80 national and international voices, performers, filmmakers and musicians to discuss issues around identity, gender, sexuality, feminism, desire, equality, cinema, mental health, public policy, power constructs and laws.

Organised by Dwijen Dinanath Arts Foundation, a

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Delhi-based not-for-profit organisation, the two-day event will feature 44 sessions across dual stages, delivering over 27 hours of discussions, performances, and cultural programmes with a line of speakers and performers hailing from Imphal in the Indian northeastern state of Manipur to Vancouver in Canada.

Among the participant in the festival are filmmaker Hansal Mehta, Carnatic vocalist T M Krishna, gay lawyer and author Saurabh Kirpal, actor Bonita Rajpurohit, podcaster couple Yogi & Kabeer, hotelier Keshav Puri, and writer-filmmaker Paromita Vohra.

A key highlight of the Rainbow Lit Fest will be a session exploring the unique perspectives of queer parents, offering a transformative lens on parenting.

This initiative will bring together queer storytellers and artists from France, Germany, and India to amplify underrepresented LGBTQIA+ voices and foster cross-cultural dialogue.

Seven films will also be screened during the festival, including "Holy Curse" and "Sheer Qorma". The directors of both these films, Snigdha Kapoor and Faraz Ansari, will be present at the festival.

It will also feature a dedicated space for stalls run by queer people from northeast India. —*PTI*

Shimla: Sanjauli Mosque demolition order upheld

SHIMLA, 30 NOV

The district court on Saturday dismissed an application filed by the All Himachal Muslim Organisation challenging 5 October order of the Municipal Commissioner's Court to demolish three "illegally" built storeys of Sanjauli mosque.

Counsel of All Himachal Muslim Organisation (AHMO) Vishva Bhushan told the reporters here that their application has been rejected and a detailed order is awaited.

On 11 September, violent protests erupted over the demand for the demolition of an alleged illegal portion of the mosque. A day later, Latif Mohammad who claimed to be the president of the Sanjauli Mosque committee and others

offered to demolish the three "unauthorised" floors of the mosque.

The Municipal Commissioner's Court had on 5 October allowed the demolition and gave two months to complete the exercise following which the AHMO filed an appeal against the order in the district court claiming Latif was not authorised to give any representation for demolition of the mosque structure. —*PTI*

Cong slaps notice on candidate for criticising Patole

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

The Maharashtra Congress unit on Saturday sought an explanation from party candidate Bunty Shelke for his remarks against state unit chief Nana Patole over the Assembly poll defeat. Shelke had accused Patole of being an "RSS agent" after the former lost from the Nagpur Central assembly constituency against the BJP candidate in recently concluded polls. The show cause notice asked Shelke to clarify his comments in two days or face suspension from the party for levelling "false allegations" against Patole. Shelke lost electoral contest against BJP's Pravin Datke by a margin of 12,000 votes. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had led a road show for Shelke during election campaigning, the results of which were declared on 23 November.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

8 held in Manipur over attacks on police station

IMPHAL, 30 NOV

Eight people have been arrested in connection with attacks on a police station and residences of MLAs in Manipur, a police statement said on Saturday. One person, identified as 20-year-old Chongtham Thoicha, who hails from Kiyam Mamang Leikai in Patsoi police station area in Imphal West district, was arrested on Thursday in connection with arson at the properties of elected representatives on 16 November, it said. Also, seven people were arrested on Thursday for attacking Kakching police station and its personnel on 27 November. "The attack was carried out to demand the release of four persons arrested on 16 November for vandalising properties of an elected member,"—*PTI*

BJP accuses AAP MLA of extortion with gangster's aid

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The BJP on Saturday lashed out at AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal alleging the involvement of an MLA of his party in extortion of money with the help of a gangster. Addressing a press conference, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia and the party's Delhi president Virendra Sachdeva played an audio clip of a purported conversation of the AAP MLA with the gangster. AAP senior leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh dismissed the allegations by the BJP, claiming that the audio clip was "fake". At the BJP press conference, Bhatia charged that the AAP was involved in threatening people and extorting money from them. He asked whether Kejriwal and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi will take action against the MLA and ask him to resign. —*PTI*

Police charges 26 in Baba murder under MCOC Act

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

The Mumbai Police has invoked the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime (MCOC) Act against 26 accused arrested so far in NCP politician Baba Siddique murder case, officials said on Saturday. It is important to note that confessions made to the police under MCOCA are admissible as evidence in court. It is also difficult to secure bail under the MCOCA, a Mumbai Police official said without elaborating. A total of 26 persons have been arrested, including the suspected main shooter Shivkumar Gautam, while suspected key conspirators Shubham Lonkar and Zishan Mohammad Akhtar are still on the run. Jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's brother Anmol was arrested in the US for his alleged role in the murder of Siddique and firing outside actor Salman Khan's Mumbai home. —*PTI*

CM from BJP, 2 DyCMs from allies: Ajit

Meanwhile, Devendra Fadnavis is the frontrunner for Maharashtra CM post

PUNE, 30 NOV

The next chief minister of Maharashtra will be from the BJP and there will be two deputy chief ministers from other Mahayuti constituents, NCP chief Ajit Pawar said here on Saturday.

The Mahayuti, which comprises the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) headed by Ajit Pawar, registered a resounding victory in the Maharashtra assembly elections. By winning 132 seats, the BJP emerged as the single largest party, while Shiv Sena and NCP won 57 and 41 seats respectively.

However, government formation has been delayed and suspense over the next CM continues.

Ajit Pawar was in the city to meet 95-year-old social activist Dr Baba Adhav, who held a protest against the alleged misuse of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the recent Maharashtra assembly polls.

While there was no announcement yet on who would be the chief minister, BJP sources said Devendra Fadnavis, who has been chief minister twice and was deputy chief minister in the last Eknath Shinde-led government, was the frontrunner for the top post. Ajit was another deputy chief ministerin the Shinde-led government.

He requested veteran activist Baba Adhav here to call off his protest against alleged misuse of EVMs in the recent state polls, saying that the verdict should be accepted. Pawar urged Adhav to end his protest. —*PTI*

The Mahayuti, which comprises of BJP, Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) headed by Ajit Pawar, registered a resounding victory in the Maharashtra Assembly elections **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP dares Cong leaders to resign

The BJP on Saturday hit back at the Congress for questioning the electoral process, including EVM's integrity, saying its chief ministers and other elected representatives like Rahul Gandhi should resign and announce that they will contest only after ballot papers are brought back. Such a stand will underscore their trust in the issues being raised by them. BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said their allegations will otherwise be nothing but empty words.

Poll verdict murder of democracy: Patole

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Saturday claimed that the results of the assembly elections reflect lack of transparency, and said the government and the Election Commission need to clear people's doubts they have raised over the poll process.

He termed the verdict of the Maharashtra polls a "murder of democracy".

In a post on X, the Congress leader said he spoke to social activist Baba Adhav, who has been protesting in Pune against the alleged misuse of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the recently-held Maharashtra elections.

Adhav, who is in his 90s, began his three-day protest at Phule Wada, the residence of social reformer Jyotiba Phule, in the city on Thursday.

"There is a lack of transparency in the Maharashtra assembly election results. Our stand is that this verdict is a murder of democracy. When people are questioning the fairness of poll process, it is the responsibility of the Election Commission and the government to clear their doubts," Patole said on the social media post.

Following the results, the opposition parties have been alleging that the ruling parties indulged in manipulation of EVMs in order to win the elections.

Meanwhile, Rashtriya Samaj Paksha (RSP), a former ally of the BJP-led Mahayuti, on Saturday joined the opposition parties in raising doubts about the EVMs. —*PTI*

Nana Patole **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong takes dig at MEA on Adani issue

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The Congress on Saturday took a swipe over the Ministry of External Affairs' statement that the Indian government is not part of the US probe into Adani Group in any manner, asking how can this government be part of a probe into itself.

In the first official reaction after the industrialist was charged with alleged fraud by prosecutors in the United States, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India is yet to receive any communication for cooperation in the case.

Tagging a media report on the remarks, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The MEA spokesperson says that the Indian Government is not part of the US probe into the Adani Group. He has simply stated the obvious. How can this Government be part of a probe into itself?" MEA has said the indictment of Indian billionaire Gautam Adani by the US prosecutors is a "legal matter" involving private firms, individuals and the US Department of Justice and that New Delhi was not informed about the case in advance. "We see this as a legal matter involving private firms and individuals and the US Department of Justice. There are established procedures and legal avenues in such cases, which we believe would be followed," Jaiswal said. Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar and another key executive have been charged by the US Department of Justice of being part of an alleged scheme to pay USD 265 million bribes to the Indian officials to win contracts for the supply of solar power that would yield USD 2 billion profit over a 20-year period. —*PTI*

Jairam Ramesh **PHOTO: X**

'Action against people fraudulently availing pensions'

T'PURAM, 30 NOV

Strict action will be taken against the government employees in Kerala who are found to be fraudulently receiving welfare pensions meant for weaker sections, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said. CM's warning came in view of the findings that around 1,500 government employees, including gazetted officers and college professors, had fraudulently claimed social security pensions.

Disciplinary action will be taken at the departmental level against those found to have fraudulently claimed pensions. Efforts will be taken to make them repay the pension received with interest, the release added.

Action will be taken against both the ineligible beneficiaries and the officials who were responsible for this.

Names of the deceased individuals will be removed from the pension list after conducting an appropriate concurrent mustering, the release said. —*PTI*

Man throws liquid on Kejri during rally, detained; AAP blames BJP

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

In a security scare, a man splashed some liquid on Arvind Kejriwal during his 'padyatra' in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Saturday, with AAP claiming that it was spirit and the "attacker" wanted to set the party supremo afire.

While police said water was thrown at Kejriwal during the public event that was organised without their permission, the BJP strongly refuted Chief Minister Atishi's accusation that the accused was a worker of the saffron party.

AAP lashed out at the BJP-led Centre for the incident and said this is the third "attack" on Kejriwal in the last 35 days.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Ashok Jha, a serving bus marshal at Delhi Transport Corporation's Khanpur Depot, has been detained.

Sources claimed that Jha during interrogation, said that he was frustrated as he was not getting his salary for the past six months.

Jha claimed that during the formation of AAP, he gave a donation to the party, but was upset with its "fake promises", the sources said.

At a press conference, Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that the man held for attacking Kejriwal had a matchbox in his hand. He claimed the liquid that fell on Kejriwal and him was spirit as they could smell it and an attempt was made to "burn him (Kejriwal) alive".

After the incident, Kejriwal targeted Union Home Minister Amit Shah, saying he should try to stop crime in Delhi instead of stalling his march.

Chief Minister Atishi alleged that a BJP worker attacked Kejriwal and claimed the saffron party seems to be frustrated after losing the Delhi elections for a third time. —*PTI*

AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal after a man allegedly splashed some liquid on the former during his padyatra in New Delhi, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Priyanka visits Wayanad as MP, pledges to work for progress

KOZHIKODE 30 NOV

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, arrived in Kerala for a two-day visit following her huge maiden electoral win from the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, on Saturday said she was "ready to start working" to ensure a better future for the people of the hill constituency.

"I am happy to be back here and I am ready to start working and do whatever I can to help the people of Wayanad have a better future," she told reporters outside the Karipur airport here.

Priyanka had scored her maiden electoral victory by winning the Wayanad Lok Sabha bypoll with a huge margin of 4,10,931 votes. Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi by accusing him of being "biased" in Adani row and of discriminating against Wayanad landslides victims by not providing them aid. —*PTI*

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with MP Priyanka Gandhi at Mukkam, in Kozhikode district, Kerala, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

VP Dhankar condemns Rajya Sabha disruptions

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Criticising the disruption of proceedings in the Rajya Sabha, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said that this "kind of spectacle" could not be afforded in the "mother of democracy".

Dhankhar, the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, made the statement while addressing a special session of the Arunachal Pradesh assembly.

"I express my deep pain, entering into the fourth quarter of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, we could not work for a single moment in Rajya Sabha, my head is in shame. We cannot afford this kind of spectacle in a country that is the mother of democracy, the largest democracy. How can we go against the spirit of the Constitution? How can we afford to walk out of our obligations?" he said.

"I'm happy to know your assembly is otherwise. It's a shining example, a beacon of hope," he added.

Like the previous three sittings of the ongoing Winter Session, the Rajya Sabha could not take up scheduled business on Friday and the proceedings were adjourned within minutes of the Assembly amid protests by opposition, demanding discussions on corruption allegations against the Adani Group, violence in Sambhal, and Manipur. He said the country's growth rate makes him proud "because no country comes close to India". —*PTI*

RSS urges B'desh to end atrocities against Hindus

HYDERABAD, 30 NOV

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has called on the interim government of Bangladesh to halt the reported atrocities against Hindus and to release ISKCON monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, who was recently jailed. RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale issued a statement condemning the violence faced by Hindu communities in Bangladesh, asserting that attacks, murders, looting, and arson by Islamic fundamentalists are deeply concerning.

Hosabale expressed disappointment at the Bangladesh government's apparent inaction regarding these incidents, stating that it seems to be a mere spectator in the face of such brutality. He remarked, "A new phase of injustice and atrocities seems to be emerging against the Hindus of Bangladesh," highlighting the suppression of peaceful protests by the Hindu communities. Chinmoy Krishna Das was arrested by Bangladeshi police earlier this week while travelling to Chittagong.

The RSS denounced his imprisonment, stating it was unjust for the government to detain a leader advocating for the rights of Hindus through peaceful demonstrations.

"The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh appeals to the Bangladesh government to ensure that the atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh stop immediately and release Shri Chinmoy Krishna Das from imprisonment," Hosabale said.

Hosabale called on India and the global community to stand with the victims, underscoring the necessity of halting the violence for the sake of world peace and brotherhood.

—*PTI*

'AIMED AT SEIZING PROPERTIES'

TMC protests against Waqf Amendment Bill

KOLKATA, 30 NOV

The TMC Minority Cell held a rally in Kolkata on Sunday to protest the Waqf Amendment Bill, which its leaders alleged was aimed at seizing properties of Muslims.

Addressing the rally, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed that the BJP-led government at the Centre does not respect the Constitution as it was moving forward on the matter without any discussion with the states.

Banerjee, who is a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Waqf Amendment Bill, alleged that the federal structure of the country was under threat because of this "authoritarian" attitude of the BJP.

"The Preamble of the Constitution is the eye of the nation. The BJP government is not following the ideals of the Preamble," he said.

Among the other speakers at the rally, held in Rani Rashmoni Road, were state Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim and Murarai MLA Mosarraf Hossain.

Hossain claimed that the Waqf Amendment Bill was part of a conspiracy to seize the properties of Muslims, and polarising the society for narrow political gains. "Today's meeting testifies that the BJP will not succeed in its gameplan," he said. The Centre had listed the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024, in its legislative agenda for the Winter Session of Parliament pending a report from the parliamentary panel.

The bill aims to amend the Waqf Act, 1995 to improve accountability and transparency in Waqf Boards, including mandatory inclusion of women. Introduced in the Lok Sabha on 8 August, it is referred for examination by the JPC, chaired by MP Jagdambika Pal. Opposition members have requested an extension of the panel's tenure to allow for substantive deliberations on the legislation. —*PTI*

TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee address a rally in protest against Waqf (Amendment) Bill, in Kolkata, West Bengal, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: X

US stealth destroyer to host 1st hypersonic missile

WASHINGTON DC, 30 NOV

The US Navy is transforming a costly flub into a potent weapon with the first shipborne hypersonic weapon, which is being retrofitted aboard the first of its three stealthy destroyers. The USS Zumwalt is at a Mississippi shipyard where workers have installed missile tubes that replace twin turrets from a gun system that was never activated because it was too expensive. Once the system is complete, the Zumwalt will provide a platform for conducting fast, precision strikes from greater distances, adding to the usefulness of the warship. "It was a costly blunder but the Navy could take victory from the jaws of defeat here, and get some utility out of them by making them into a hypersonic platform," said Bryan Clark, a defence analyst at the Hudson Institute. *—PTI*

Kosovo blames Serbia for power plant canal blast

PRISTINA, 30 NOV

A canal in Kosovo feeding two power plants that generate most of the nation's electricity has been damaged in an explosion, with the prime minister calling it a "terrorist attack" by neighbouring Serbia. The incident occurred on Friday near the town of Zubin Potok in the troubled north of the country, about 16km from the border with Serbia, cutting the flow of water needed for the plants' cooling systems and prompting fears that much of the country could be left without electricity by the weekend.Serbia on Saturday condemned the blast, Foreign Minister Marko Djuric denying what he called "premature accusations" that are "a deliberate diversion", as he suggested the involvement of Kurti's government.
—Al Jazeera

Ireland headed for coalition govt, says exit poll

DUBLIN, 30 NOV

An exit poll in Ireland's parliamentary election released late Friday suggests the three biggest parties have won roughly equal shares and the country is headed for another coalition government. A poll released as voting ended at 10 pm said center-right party Fine Gael was the first choice of 21 percent of voters, with its center-right coalition partner in the outgoing government, Fianna Fail at 19.5 percent. Left-of-center opposition Sinn Fein was at 21.1 percent in the poll. The result will show whether Ireland bucks the global trend of incumbents being ousted by disgruntled voters after years of pandemic, international instability and a cost-of-living pressures.
—Arab News

Philippine detects Chinese vessels in disputed waters

MANILA, 30 NOV

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has confirmed the repeated presence of three Chinese Maritime Scientific Research Vessels (MSRVs) within and near the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), raising concerns about potential unauthorized operations in the country's waters. The vessels, named Xiang Yang Hong 3, Jia Geng, and Xiang Yang Hong 10, were first spotted on 17 November, 257 nautical miles northeast of Santa Ana, Cagayan. Although this location lies outside the Philippines' 200-nautical-mile EEZ, further monitoring showed that they later entered Philippine waters the Manila Times reported. The PCG noted that these vessels had entered the EEZ before 17 November. On 14 November, it was spotted near Davao Oriental, on 20 November, in Siargao Island. *—PTI*

In 1st speech since truce, Hezbollah chief claims victory

Israel says it struck Hezbollah arms smuggling sites in Syria

BEIRUT, 30 NOV

- Israel said forces will be withdrawn as it ensures that the agreement is being enforced. Israel says it reserves the right to strike Hezbollah if it violates the terms of the truce

The head of Hezbollah, Naim Qassem said that to coordinate closely with the Lebanese army on the ceasefire deal with Israel, which he said the terror group had agreed to "with heads held high."

Qassem also declared that Hezbollah had achieved a "great victory" against Israel that "surpasses that of July 2006," referring to the last time the terror group went to war against Israel.

"We won because we prevented the enemy from destroying Hezbollah... [and] from annihilating or weakening the resistance," Qassem said.

It was Qassem's first address since the ceasefire came into effect on Wednesday, more than a year after Hezbollah launched near-daily rocket and drone attacks on Israel. The terror group in Lebanon said its attacks were a show of support for Palestinians amid the war in the Gaza Strip sparked by the Hamas terror group's devastating 7 October, 2023, onslaught. The relentless attacks forced the displacement of some 60,000 residents of northern Israel.

Qassem said Hezbollah had "approved the deal, with the resistance strong in the battlefield, and our heads held high with our right to defend [ourselves]."

The truce, brokered by the United States and France, includes an initial two-month ceasefire in which Hezbollah terrorists are to withdraw north of the Litani River, about 20km from the boundary between Israel and Lebanon, and Israeli forces are to return to their side of the border. The buffer zone would be patrolled by Lebanese troops and UN peacekeepers.

Naim Qassem
PHOTO: X@DRPHOENICIA

Israeli officials have said forces will be withdrawn gradually as it ensures that the agreement is being enforced. Israel says it reserves the right to strike Hezbollah if it violates the terms of the truce.

Israeli aircraft struck Hezbollah weapons smuggling sites along Syria's border with Lebanon, the Israeli military said Saturday, testing a fragile, days-old ceasefire that halted months of fighting between the sides but has seen continued sporadic fire.

The military said it struck sites that had been used to smuggle weapons from Syria to Lebanon after the ceasefire took effect, which the military said was a violation of its terms.

There was no immediate comment from Syrian authorities or activists monitoring the conflict in that country. Hezbollah also did not immediately comment. *—Agencies*

Russian President Putin and North Korean leader Kim signed a treaty to provide military aid if either is attacked *PHOTO: X@THETORONTOSUN*

Kim vows support for Russia's war in Ukraine

SEOUL, 30 NOV

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed his country will "invariably support" Russia's war in Ukraine as he met Russia's defence chief, the North's state media reported Saturday.

A Russia military delegation led by Defence Minister Andrei Belousov arrived in North Korea on Friday, amid growing international concern about the two countries' expanding cooperation after North Korea sent thousands of troops to Russia last month.

The official Korean Central News Agency said that Kim and Belousov reached "a satisfactory consensus" on boosting strategic partnership and defending each country's sovereignty, security interests and international justice in the face of the rapidly-changing international security environments in a Friday meeting. Kim said that North Korea "will invariably support the policy of the Russian Federation to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from the imperialists' moves for hegemony," KCNA said. In June, Kim and Putin signed a treaty requiring both countries to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. *—PTI*

Hefazat-e-Islam supporters protest demanding an immediate ban on ISKCON in Dhaka, Bangladesh *PHOTO: PTI*

9 held in B'desh lawyer's murder

DHAKA, 30 NOV

At least nine people have been arrested in connection with the murder of a lawyer who was killed during violence in Bangladesh's southeastern port city of Chattogram, police said on Saturday.

They were arrested after a case was filed against 46 persons, mostly cleanliness workers belonging to the minority Hindu community, for their involvement in the murder of assistant public prosecutor Saiful Islam, who was in his early 30s, during clashes on Tuesday between security personnel and followers of Hindu community leader Chinmoy Krishna Das after he was denied bail and sent to jail by a Chattogram court.

Das, the spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport here on Monday in a sedition case.

"Saiful Islam's father filed the case last night naming 46 people," said Abdul Karim, the officer in charge of the port city's Kotwali police station. Police said one person identified as Chandan Das was the primary accused as he was seen chopping the lawyer with a sharp weapon.

The incident sparked nationwide outrage with lawyers and political groups taking to the streets demanding actions against Islam's killers while some groups wanted ISKCON Bangladesh to be banned.

Meanwhile, three Hindu temples were vandalised on Friday in Chattogram.

"A group of several hundred slogan-shouting people threw brickbats at the temples, damaging the Shoni Temple and the gates of the other two temples," the temple authorities said. *—PTI*

Pakistan forms JIT to probe Karachi airport attack

ISLAMABAD, 30 NOV

Authorities in Pakistan's Sindh province have set up a joint interrogation team (JIT) to probe two suspects who allegedly facilitated last month's suicide attack on a Chinese convoy near Karachi Airport in October.

The suicide attack on 6 October claimed the lives of two Chinese engineers and one Pakistani national, straining ties between Pakistan and China.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack and police registered a first information report (FIR) against leaders of the BLA and others three days after the incident.

The Dawn newspaper reported on Saturday that the JIT was formed by the Sindh Home Department to probe the two suspects arrested during an intelligence-based operation earlier this month.

One of the masterminds of the suicide bombing, Muhammad Javed alias Sameer, and his accomplice Gul Nisa were arrested at CD Highway near Umar Goth Chowk in Karachi while riding a bike.

According to a notification issued by Home Department Additional Chief Secretary Muhammad Iqbal Memon, the JIT was formed at the request of the deputy inspector general (DIG) of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). *—PTI*

Trudeau meets Trump at Mar-A-Lago amid tariff threats

FLORIDA, 30 NOV

During US president-elect Donald Trump's first term he calld Canadian PM Justin Trudeau two-faced and a far-left lunatic *PHOTO: XXX*

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with US President-elect Donald Trump at the latter's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida on Friday to discuss escalating trade tensions. The meeting follows Trump's declaration of a potential 25 per cent tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico, contingent upon both countries addressing issues of drug trafficking, particularly fentanyl, and illegal immigration into the United States.

He is the first G7 leader to visit the resort since the US election. Trudeau is accompanied by Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc who is in charge of border security.

The tariff threat has raised alarm in Canada, where the economy is heavily reliant on trade with its southern neighbour. In 2022, more than three-quarters of Canadian exports—valued at approximately USD423 billion—were sent to the United States, underpinning around 2 million jobs in Canada. Economists warn that implementing such tariffs could have detrimental effects on the economies of all involved nations. Currently, Canada's economy is facing a slowdown, further compounded by rising living costs, which have negatively impacted Trudeau's popularity. With a general election due by late October 2025, polls indicate that Trudeau's Liberal Party is trailing behind the opposing Conservative Party.

In response to Trump's tariff threats, Trudeau convened a meeting with the premiers of all ten Canadian provinces to discuss the implications for US relations. While some analysts believe Trump's threats may be negotiating tactics, Trudeau dismissed it.

Trudeau has a complicated relationship with the president-elect. During Trump's first term he also called Trudeau "two-faced" and a "far-left lunatic." *—PTI*

At least 27 dead in Nigereria boat accident

ABUJA, 30 NOV

PHOTO: X

At least 27 people have died, with over 100, primarily women, reported missing after a boat capsized on the River Niger in northern Nigeria. The boat, carrying approximately 200 passengers from Kogi State to neighbouring Niger State, overturned on Friday, according to Ibrahim Audu, spokesman for the Niger State Emergency Management Agency.

By Friday evening, rescuers recovered 27 bodies, while local divers continued their search according to Sandra Musa, spokeswoman for Kogi's emergency services. No survivors had been located around 12 hours post-incident.

The cause of the capsizing has not yet been confirmed, but local reports suggested the boat may have been overloaded. Overcrowding is a persistent issue in remote parts of Nigeria, where inadequate road infrastructure often forces individuals to rely on precarious water transport.*—PTI*

Indian-origin man gets lifer for girlfriend's murder in UK

LONDON, 30 NOV

An Indian-origin man who brutally beat up his girlfriend to death at his home in East Midlands region of England, has been sentenced to life imprisonment by a UK court.

Police described it as a case of domestic abuse and said it is vital anyone suffering gets the support they need to put a stop before it is too late.

Raj Sidpara, a 50-year-old resident of Leicester, was convicted last week of the murder of Tarnjeet Riaz, also known as Tarnjeet Chagger, following a trial at Leicester Crown Court.

On Friday, Sidpara was handed a life sentence with a minimum term of 21 years behind bars before being considered for parole, according to Leicestershire Police.

The couple had been in a relationship for around five months and by the time emergency services were called to his home on Tarbat Road on the afternoon of May 6, Tarnjeet was already dead.

Tarnjeet, 44, was found with extensive trauma to her face, as well as multiple broken ribs, when she was found unresponsive by the emergency services, who had been called by Sidpara.

In October, Sidpara admitted the lesser manslaughter charge of causing the injuries to his girlfriend but denied intending to kill her or cause her serious harm.

The court heard that his victim was left with "two enormous black eyes", bleeding on the brain and 20 rib fractures, among other injuries. "You have steadfastly refused to explain what you did or why," Judge William Harbage said, addressing the accused in court. *—PTI*

INDIAN STUDENT FROM TELANGANA SHOT DEAD IN US

HYDERABAD, 30 NOV

A youth from Khammam district of Telangana was shot dead by miscreants at a gas station in United States where he was working, family members said on Saturday.

Sai Teja Nukarapu, 22, was shot at by the assailants in the gas station near Chicago in the early hours of Saturday Indian time, BRS MLC Madhusudan Thatha said, citing preliminary information received from the US.

Teja completed BBA in India and is pursuing MBA in US. One of the relatives of the victim told media persons that the deceased was doing a part-time job. It is sad to know that Sai Teja was shot dead when he stayed on at the place of work to help a friend, the relative said. *—PTI*

FIRST TIME SINCE 2016

Rebels launch attacks on Syria's Aleppo city

BEIRUT, 30 NOV

The insurgents initiated their surprise offensive on Wednesday, seizing control of numerous villages and towns *PHOTO: PTI*

Syrian government forces clashed with insurgents in Aleppo for the first time since 2016, as reports emerged of airstrikes targeting rebel supply routes on the city's outskirts. The state media reported on Saturday that insurgents had made significant gains, breaching government defences and entering the western districts of Aleppo with minimal resistance.

The insurgents initiated their surprise offensive on Wednesday, seizing control of numerous villages and towns, including a strategic location south of Aleppo. According to the pro-government Al-Watan newspaper, airstrikes targeted rebel reinforcements, resulting in the deaths of 20 fighters, as confirmed by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Residents of Aleppo have reported intense clashes, leading many to flee the fighting. Schools and government offices remained closed, while bakeries operated as usual. Videos circulated on social media showed insurgents near the historic Aleppo citadel, engaging with local residents to reassure them of their intentions. State media asserted that "terrorists," including sleeper cells, had infiltrated parts of the city, prompting government troops to pursue and arrest some individuals posing for photos near notable landmarks.

Commentators on state television indicated that army reinforcements and Russian support would counter the insurgents, attributing the attack to Turkish backing of the opposition. Meanwhile, reports from Russia's state news agency stated that 200 militants had been killed in airstrikes as the conflict reignited following a period of low-level violence.

This renewed offensive in Aleppo follows the pivotal 2016 battle, which marked a significant turning point in the ongoing civil war that erupted after protests against President Bashar Assad's regime in 2011. *—PTI*

Nine killed, thousands displaced in Thailand floods

BANGKOK, 30 NOV

PHOTO: X

Severe flooding in southern Thailand, driven by heavy rains, has resulted in nine fatalities and displaced over 13,000 residents, according to officials on Saturday. Rescue teams are currently using boats and jet skis to reach those stranded, as local media captures footage of residents wading through murky, chest-deep waters with cars submerged in flooded streets.

The Thai disaster agency reported that flooding across eight provinces has affected over half a million households, prompting an urgent response from aid organisations. Temporary shelters have been established in schools and temples for those forced to evacuate their homes. Nampa, a resident of Songkhla province, expressed her concerns about dwindling food supplies amid the crisis. "We are doing fine now, but I am not sure how long we can stay in this condition," she stated.

The Thai Meteorological Department has warned of ongoing "very heavy rain" in the southern regions, with the government allocating 50 million baht per province for flood relief. Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra emphasised the need to restore normalcy swiftly amidst concerns of severe weather patterns attributed to climate change. *—Arab News*

Life insurance staff urge GST removal on premiums

KOLKATA, 30 NOV

A prominent life insurance employees' federation on Saturday said it will launch a nationwide campaign to press for its demands, including withdrawal of GST on insurance premiums and no further hike in foreign direct investment in the sector. Addressing a conference of the All India Life Insurance Employees' Federation (AINLIEF), general secretary V Narasimhan said it will be approaching MPs from all political parties to voice support for the demands. The All India Triennial General Conference here is being attended by delegates from across the country. The federation's demands also include withdrawal of the new labour codes and introduction of the old pension scheme for employees recruited in LIC after 2010. At present, the FDI in the insurance sector is 74 per cent and the Centre is contemplating raising it to 100 per cent, he said.—*PTI*

OVL gets equinor's Azerbaijan stake for $60M

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

ONGC Videsh Ltd, the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), has completed the acquisition of Norwegian firm Equinor's stake in an Azerbaijan oilfield and an associated pipeline for USD 60 million, the firm said in a statement. OVL "has completed the acquisition of 0.615 per cent participating interest (PI) in offshore Azeri Chirag Gunashli (ACG) field in Azerbaijan from Equinor. This also includes the acquisition of 0.737 per cent shares of Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline company through its wholly-owned subsidiary ONGC BTC Limited", a company statement said. The firm had signed a sale purchase agreement (SPA) for the stake buy in July and the deal was completed on 29 November. —*PTI*

Pearl Academy, Tech Mahindra to set up innovation hub

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

Pearl Academy, a unit of the Creative Arts Education Society (CAES), on Saturday said it has collaborated with Tech Mahindra to set up the 'Makers Lab', which will serve as an innovation hub focused on Generative AI (GenAI), metaverse, and gaming. The lab will be set up in Bengaluru. The collaboration aims to empower students, faculty, and industry professionals to develop solutions in artificial intelligence (AI), metaverse, and immersive gaming experiences, Pearl Academy said in a statement. Pearl Academy also said its faculty will collaborate with Tech Mahindra's researchers to apply human-centred design principles to technology development. —*PTI*

Bajaj restructure won't affect KTM's India business

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Austrian bike maker KTM on Saturday said the judicial restructuring of its holding firm Pierer Mobility AG has no impact on business related to products co-developed with Bajaj Auto for Indian domestic market and select export markets. However, it is impacting business of Pierer Mobility AG/KTM AG that is run out of Austria, including exports from Austria, India and China to its key markets in the US and Europe. On 26 November, given the immediate liquidity constraints, the Executive Board of KTM AG has decided to file an application for the initiation of judicial restructuring proceedings with self-administration over the assets of KTM AG and its subsidiaries KTM Components GmbH and KTM F&E GmbH, the company said in a statement. All other subsidiaries of KTM AG, in particular all sales companies, are not affected, it added. PBAG holds a nearly 75 per cent stake in its subsidiary Pierer Mobility AG (PMAG), the company of KTM. —*PTI*

Net equity investment turns positive this week

Foreign investors sold less in November Vs October

MUMBAI, 30 NOV

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) sold equities worth Rs 21,612 crore in November, marking a significant decline in selling compared to Rs 94,017 crore in October, according to data released by the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL).

Despite the overall outflows in November, the week from 25-29 November witnessed a positive shift, with net FPI investments in equities turning positive at Rs 4,921.5 crore.

Market experts noted that the recent improvement reflects cautious optimism amid evolving global and domestic conditions. However, challenges remain. Analysts observed that foreign investments will be influenced by a combination of factors, including India's latest GDP data, which came in below expectations, and the continuing preference of investors for the US market.

Market experts noted that the recent improvement reflects cautious optimism amid evolving global and domestic conditions PHOTO: X

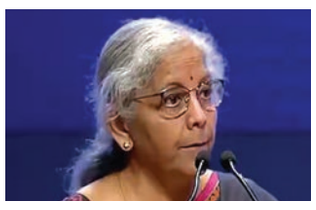
In June, July, August, and September, the FPIs bought stocks worth Rs 26,565 crore, Rs 32,365 crore, Rs 7,320 crore, and Rs 57,724 crore, respectively. As per definition, Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) involves an investor buying foreign financial assets. Recently after the US elections the Foreign investors become seller in Indian markets amid the strengthening of dollar and the surge in flows to the US markets.

As global markets continue to influence investment trends, the coming weeks will be critical in determining whether the recent positive momentum in FPI investments can be sustained. —*ANI*

CREDIT OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Nirmala hands over sanction letters to Madhubani residents

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV



Nirmala Sitharaman PHOTO: PTI

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday handed over sanction letters from banks to beneficiaries under various Central Government schemes during the Credit Outreach Programme in Madhubani, Bihar.

Loans worth Rs 1,121 crore were disbursed during the Credit Outreach to more than 50,000 beneficiaries, Nirmala Sitharaman's Office said in a post on social media X.

The schemes under which the sanction letters have been issued include PM MUDRA, PMEGP, Kisan Credit Card (Crop), KCC (Animal Husbandry & Fisheries), Stand Up India, PM-SVANidhi, PM Vishwakarma, Retail, MSMEs, SHGs, Agricultural loans, etc, as per the post.

The Union Finance Minister, during the Credit Outreach Programme, distributed copies of the Constitution of India in Maithili and Sanskrit languages - which were released recently on Samvidhan Diwas - to various people during the Credit Outreach Programme in Madhubani, Bihar.

Sitharaman encouraged women to come out and take advantage of the Union Government's programs.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji says that there should be Lakhpati Didi in every village of the country. For that, whatever work has to be done by the banks, they are doing it. Financial assistance and training are being given to women through every self-help group (SHG)", she said. —*ANI*

SAYS HDFC REPORT

RBI to maintain repo rates, eyes February reduction

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to maintain its policy rate during its upcoming meeting next week, as GDP growth slowed significantly in the second quarter of FY25. However, the likelihood of a rate cut in February has increased, according to a report by HDFC Bank.

The country's GDP growth for Q2 FY25 slowed to 5.4 per cent year-on-year, down from 6.7 per cent in Q1. Gross Value Added (GVA) growth also moderated to 5.6 per cent in Q2 from 6.8 per cent in the previous quarter, highlighting a broad-based slowdown in the economy.

The report pointed out that the demand side showed signs

PHOTO: PTI

of weakness. Consumption growth slowed, particularly due to weaker urban demand, as seen in high-frequency indicators. Moderation in leveraged consumption was also noted, with lower growth in unsecured retail lending, including personal loans and credit cards.

On a positive note, the report suggested that rural demand is likely to recover in the second half of the fiscal year. This optimism is based on strong agricultural performance, payouts under government schemes, and increased government spending, which could drive economic activity.

In its last meeting in October, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of RBI kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the 10th consecutive time.

Now as per report, the weaker-than-expected GDP data has increased the chances of a rate cut in February. For now, the report noted that the RBI is expected to adopt a wait-and-watch approach, keeping the current policy rate unchanged in its upcoming meeting. —*ANI*

Retail space demand up by 5% in major cities

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Leasing of retail space in shopping malls and prominent high streets rose nearly 5 per cent during January-September this year across eight major cities, according to Cushman & Wakefield.

Real estate consultant Cushman & Wakefield data showed that the absorption or leasing of retail space in Grade-A malls and main high streets across the top eight cities stood at 5.53 million square feet during January-September 2024 against 5.29 million square feet in the corresponding period of the preceding year.

These eight cities are -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Ahmedabad.

Commenting on the data, Akash Nagpal, VP-Leasing of realty firm Trehan Iris, said this growth reflects a strong rebound and a renewed sense of confidence in the retail sector. According to Cushman & Wakefield data, the leasing of retail space in high streets increased to 3.82 million square feet during January-September this year from 3.44 million square feet in the year-ago period. However, the absorption of retail space in shopping malls declined to 1.72 million square feet from 1.85 million square feet.

Among cities, Hyderabad's prominent high-street locations saw strong demand for retail space, with the leasing of 1.72 million square feet during January-September 2024 against 1.60 million square feet in the year-ago period. —*PTI*

India, ADB ink $98M deal to boost horticulture

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a USD 98 million loan agreement to enhance horticulture crop productivity in the country.

The Ministry of Finance on Friday stated that the funding will support the establishment of disease-free planting material systems, boosting crop yields, quality, and resilience to climate change.

As per the ministry the project aims to establish clean plant centres equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories for disease diagnostics and staffed by trained experts.

These centres will maintain disease-free foundation materials and roll out a clean plant certification scheme. Accredited private nurseries will be tested and certified to ensure farmers have access to high-quality planting materials.

In addition to increasing crop productivity, the project is also expected to help farmers adapt to the challenges of climate change. Rising temperatures are affecting pest and disease behavior, and the initiative's focus on disease-free materials will contribute to long-term resilience. —*ANI*

NCLAT allows IL&FS to sell subsidiary IPRWL

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT has given a go-ahead to debt-ridden IL&FS group for the sale of its subsidiary IL&FS Paradip Refinery Water Ltd (IPRWL) to a successful bidder.

According to reports, this may enable IL&FS to repay a debt of around Rs 1,000 crore.

IPRWL was set up to meet water requirement of the 15 MTPA Paradip Refinery Project developed by IOC in Odisha.

IL&FS, which is paring its debt through asset resolution, has not received consent from IOCL for sale of its stake in IPRWL.

It had approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), which is supervising the process, to direct IOCL to either acquire 100 per cent shareholding in IPRWL at a fair valuation or grant its consent as per the terms of the BOOT agreement and the RFP so as to enable IL&FS to sell it.

However, NCLAT in its order also made it clear that

PHOTO: PTI

- Insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT has given a go-ahead to debt-ridden IL&FS group for the sale of its subsidiary IL&FS Paradip Refinery Water Ltd (IPRWL) to a successful bidder

the successful entity should be one who is eligible as per the terms of the BOOT agreement and has relevant technical know-how to carry on the project.

IL&FS group has paid Rs 38,082 crore to its creditors as of September 30, 2024, according to the latest status report affidavit filed by the debt-ridden firm before NCLAT. —*PTI*

Sonowal seeks Italy's tie up for Maritime Museum

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Union Shipping, Ports and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday asked Italian museums to collaborate with India for the upcoming National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) in Gujarat's Lothal.

Speaking during a seminar on blue economy and space held on the sidelines of 93-year-old Italian ship Amerigo Vespucci's call on Mumbai port, Sonowal said India is building the largest museum devoted to maritime heritage at Lothal, a site of the Indus Valley civilisation.

The Union Cabinet had recently given the nod for the NMHC, which is estimated to cost over Rs 3,500 crore, as per some reports.

Sonowal said as early as 4,000 BC, Indian ships went to neighbouring countries with produce such as spices, textiles, and arts and crafts.

Indian ships had a reputation of being sturdy and were manned by expert seamen, he said. —*PTI*

Central govt capex to surge by 25%

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The central government's capital expenditure is expected to surge by an impressive 25 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in the second half of the financial year 2025, according to a report by Jefferies

The report also noted that the overall expenditure of the government is also expected to surge by 15 per cent. It highlights that despite an increase in populist schemes in the run-up to elections, the central government remains committed to investing in infrastructure development over welfare-driven measures.

The report underlined that while populist policies have gained traction, especially in state elections, the central government's spending priorities show a balanced approach.

PHOTO: X

- The report also noted that the overall expenditure of the government is also expected to surge by 15 per cent

The report noted that the growing success of handout schemes in state elections, such as Maharashtra's welfare programme costing Rs 460 billion annually (1.1 per cent of the state's GDP), does raise concerns about a potential wave of populism.

The report analysis showed that 14 out of 28 Indian states already have similar schemes, covering approximately 120 million households and costing a combined 0.7-0.8 per cent of India's GDP.

While foreign investors sold more than USD 12.5 billion worth of Indian equities in the last two months, a significant amount by historical standards--domestic investors have absorbed the outflows.

Notably, October saw record inflows into equity mutual funds, even as market was undergoing a correction. —*ANI*

5 YEAR TRIUMPH

Reliance tops Wizikey media visibility rankings

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

Reliance Industries - India's largest corporate by revenues, profits, market value and social impact - topped the 2024 Wizikey News Score ranking as India's most visible corporate in the media, the AI-powered media intelligence firm said.

Reliance's visibility across media is significantly higher than even the leading FMCG or banking and finance companies in India.

Reliance scored 97.43 out of 100 on the News Score for 2024. It was 96.46 in 2023, 92.56 in 2022, and 84.9 in 2021, showing consistent growth year after year while being number one throughout.

The Wizikey's News Score is

Reliance scored 97.43 out of 100 on the News Score for 2024 PHOTO: X

determined by the volume of news, headline presence, reach of publications, and readership. Reliance has continued to top the Wizikey News Score annual rankings since its inception for each of the last five years.

Reliance ranking was above the rest of the field with an unassailable News Score of 97.43, followed by State Bank of India (89.13), HDFC Bank (86.24), One97 Communications (84.63), ICICI Bank (84.33), and Zomato (82.94) in the Wizikey rankings.

In the 2024 ranking, Bharti Airtel is in the seventh position, followed by Infosys, Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and ITC. Adani Group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises is ranked at 40.

According to Wizikey's research, Reliance stands head and shoulders above the rest in terms of PR efficiency. Its score at 201.4k in terms of volume, 41.6k of headlines, 13.7k under the publication parameter and 57.2 bn on the readership criteria - each parameter representing a wide 30-100 per cent gap over the rest of the field. —*PTI*

Fintech, AI entrepreneurs win at Indo-European forum

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

High achievers facilitating cross-border partnerships between India and Europe were among leading entrepreneurs who received awards at the annual Indo-European Business Forum (IEBF) meet at the House of Lords complex in London.

The 2024 IEBF Global Business Meet on Friday, themed as the 'Viksit Bharat Investment Summit', was aimed at spotlighting the many business and investment opportunities offered by India's goal of moving towards a developed economy by 2047.

"To me, the thing that ties the UK and India together most closely is that we are two countries chasing the future," said Kanishka Narayan, the Welsh Indian Labour MP who recently returned from a visit to India as part of a parliamentary delegation for bilateral exchanges.

Among those honoured at the event, Ashesh Jani, Co-founder and CEO of Ribbon Plc, named Fintech of the Year for his efforts to "support millions of Indian students and professionals navigating the complexities of international financial systems".

"This year's event comes against the backdrop of Prime Ministers Keir Starmer and Narendra Modi announcing the relaunch of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks, which IBEF has been engaging with and is hopeful that a deal will be signed by next year," said IBEF Founder Vijay Goel. —*PTI*

India beat Japan 3-2 in Junior Asia Cup 2024

MUSCAT, 30 NOV

The Indian Junior hockey team registered a hard-fought 3-2 victory in their second Men's Junior Asia Cup 2024 match against Japan, in Muscat, Oman. Thokchom Kingson Singh (12') opened the account for India but Japan's Neo Sato (15', 38') scored soon after to restore parity. As both teams traded penalty corners in the second half, Rohit (36') gave India the lead but Neo Sato found the back of the net again to level the scores. As the second quarter began, India attempted to regain the lead with Manmeet Singh testing the keeper twice in quick succession within two minutes, however, Kisho Kuroda was up to the task on both occasions —*ANI*

PHOTO: X

Kane becomes 1st NZ player to score 9000 Test runs

CHRISTCHURCH, 30 NOV

Star batter Kane Williamson on Tuesday etched his name in the record book as he became the first New Zealand cricketer to score 9,000 Test runs. He achieved this during the first Test match against England in Christchurch. After returning from injury, Kane Williamson displayed strong performance in the Christchurch Test. The 34-year-old played a 61-run knock from 86 balls in New Zealand's second inning. His knock came to an end after Chris Woakes got rid of him in the 36th over.Earlier in the first inning, the Kiwi batter scored 93 runs from 197 balls at a strike rate of 47.21. —*PTI*

Vinicius Jr, Carvajal nominated for Best FIFA Player 2024

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

The nominations for the FIFA best men's player award for 2024 have been announced, featuring top football talents such as Vinicius Jr., Dani Carvajal, Jude Bellingham, Kylian Mbappe, Fede Valverde, and Toni Kroos. Barcelona's Aitana Bonmati leads the nominees for the women's award, further highlighting the diverse and impressive talent in women's football. Voting for the best players, coaches, and goalkeepers will involve an equal distribution of votes among fans, current national team captains, and media representatives. The date for the awards ceremony has not yet been announced. Notably absent from the FIFA Best Men's selection is Cristiano Ronaldo, who recently surpassed 900 career goals. Despite his record-breaking 35 goals for Al Nassr in the Saudi Pro League last season, Ronaldo has only made the shortlist for the best attacker. —*ANI*

Southampton held back by VAR; Brighton now 2nd

BRIGHTON, 30 NOV

Southampton was denied a priceless victory by a controversial VAR decision and ended up drawing with host Brighton 1-1 in the English Premier League. Kaoru Mitoma spectacularly headed Brighton into a first half lead and Flynn Downes hammered the equaliser an hour in. Then minutes later teammate Cameron Archer converted a cross from Saints substitute Ryan Fraser. A VAR check of more than four minutes eventually decided Archer was onside but then penalised Adam Armstrong, who was offside but did not touch the ball, for interfering with goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen. Brighton's point lifted it up to second on the table, level on points and goal difference with Manchester City —*PTI*

Sindhu cruises to Syed Modi badminton final

Sindu crushes Unnati Hooda 21-12, 21-9 in just 36 minutes

LUCKNOW, 30 NOV

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu cruised into the women's singles final with a dominating straight-game win over fellow Indian Unnati Hooda at the Syed Modi International Super 300 badminton tournament here on Saturday.

Top seed Sindhu outclassed the 17-year-old Hooda 21-12 21-9 in just 36 minutes in the semifinal.

Hooda struggled to challenge Sindhu, committing a series of unforced errors that allowed her illustrious opponent to maintain control throughout the match.

"I am happy with today's performance. From the beginning, I maintained the lead. I was just trying out a few strokes and overall, I was confident with the way I was playing," Sindhu said after the match.

A former world champion, Sindhu, currently ranked 18th, will face either Thailand's Lalinrat Chaiwan or China's Wu Luo Yu in the final as she chases her third Syed Modi International title.

Earlier, India's mixed doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila advanced to the final with a convincing straight-game victory over China's Zhi Hong Zhou and Jia Yi Yang.

The fifth-seeded Indians secured a 21-16, 21-15 win in the 42-minute semifinal. They will meet the winner of the other semifinal between Chinese duo of Pin Yi Liao and Ke Xin Huang and Thailand's sixth-seeded pair Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran.

Reflecting further on her game, Sindhu said: "I am definitely happy with the way I am going. Definitely, there is a scope for a lot of improvement... it's not just that if we finish training or if we are at the top, we don't have to train. Every day is a new process, and I am doing that."

Sindhu, who has been working with coaches Anup Sridhar and Korea's Lee Hyun-il, also spoke about adapting her fitness regimen —*PTI*

Indian mixed doubles pair of Tanisha and Dhruv PHOTO: PTI

Syed Modi badminton: Crasto-Kapila enters final

LUCKNOW, 30 NOV

Indian mixed doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila sailed into the final of the Syed Modi International Super 300 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over Chinese duo of Zhi Hong Zhou and Jia Yi Yang here on Saturday. The fifth seeded Indian combination beat their fourth seeded Chinese opponents 21-16 21-15 in the semifinal that lasted 42 minutes. They will next play the winner of the other semifinal between China's Pin Yi Liao and Ke Xin Huang and sixth seeded Thailand pair of Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran. Women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Ashwini Ponnapa will play Li Jing Bao and Qian Li in the semifinals. Star men's singles player Lakshya Sen will take on Shogo Ogawa in the semifinals, while the Indian combination of Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy and Sai Pratheek K will take on compatriots Ishaan Bhatnagar Sankar Prasad Udayakumar in men's doubles —*PTI*

PAK APPLIES T&C

PCB backs hybrid model if ICC applies it to India

KARACHI, 30 NOV

Backing down from its boycott threat, the Pakistan Cricket Board has told the ICC that it is willing to accept the 'Hybrid' model for hosting next year's Champions Trophy provided the world body allows the same arrangement for events to be held in India till 2031.

A top PCB source told PTI that the Board is also demanding a greater share in the annual revenue cycle for agreeing to the model under which India would be playing its share of matches, including the clash against Pakistan in Dubai, owing to security concerns. The Champions Trophy is to be held in February-March.

Till 2031, India are due to host three ICC men's events -- the 2026 T20 World Cup jointly with Sri Lanka, the 2029 Champions Trophy and the 2031 ODI World Cup jointly with Bangladesh.

Given that Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are co-hosts for two major events, Pakistan would not be compelled to travel to India if they insist against it. The point of contention could be just the 2029 Champions Trophy, which will be held entirely in India.

Another flash-point could be next year's women's ODI World Cup in October, also to be held in India.

The state of flux surrounding next year's Champions Trophy is now expected to be resolved in the next couple of days after the ICC executive board considers Pakistan's latest demands.

The ICC Board met briefly to find a solution on Friday but no agreement could be reached. The world body eventually told PCB to either accept the hybrid model or be prepared to be excluded from the tournament after Naqvi reiterated the unyielding position of his country. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

INDIA VS PM XI: MATCH ABANDONED DUE TO RAIN

CANBERRA, 30 NOV

Unrelenting rain forced the abandonment of the first-day's play of the two-day practice match between India and Prime Minister's XI here on Saturday, robbing Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill of some much-needed Pink ball game time ahead of the day-night second Test against Australia at Adelaide.

The teams have agreed to play a 50-over-a-side match on Sunday at the Manuka Oval, weather permitting.

However, the day might have come as a dampener for captain Rohit, who had skipped the first Test at Perth to welcome a baby boy into his family, ahead of the Pink Ball Test, starting from 6 December.

Though he has had couple of extensive net sessions with Pink ball, facing some quality bowlers in a real-match situation holds a different value, considering India's last day-night Test was against Sri Lanka in March 2022 in Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, pacer Josh Hazlewood was on Saturday ruled out of the second Test against India — a day-night match — starting here on December 6 with a "low grade left side" injury, Cricket Australia announced.

Australia are trailing 0-1 in the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy after a 295-run shellacking in the first Test at Perth. —*PTI*

Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill PHOTO: PTI

- The teams have agreed to play a 50-over-a-side match on Sunday at the Manuka Oval, weather permitting

WORLD CHESS C'SHIP

Gukesh, Liren draw again; tied after 5 matches

SINGAPORE, 30 NOV

Indian challenger D Gukesh played out a hard-fought draw with white pieces in the fifth game of the World Chess Championship against defending champion Ding Liren of China here Saturday.

The second draw in a row left both players with an identical tally on 2.5 points apiece, still shy of 5 more points in order to win the championship.

The two players signed peace after 40 moves. It was the third draw of the match.

The 18-year-old Gukesh is the youngest ever challenger for the crown and had won the third game on Wednesday.

The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game before the two played out draws in the second and fourth game.

It was the first time in the match so far that Liren did not have any problems with his black pieces. The defending champion was at ease as Gukesh yet again employed the King's pawn opening and faced the French defense for the second time in the match.

A pair of rooks changed hands soon after, leaving Gukesh with a level position. But, the Indian, true to his style, tried to create an imbalanced position soon after by allowing Liren to get a protected passed pawn on the sixth rank. —*PTI*

D Gukesh and Ding Liren signed peace after 40 moves PHOTO: X

Pranavi tied-third in Spain

MALAGA, 30 NOV

Pranavi Urs added a solid 3-under 69 to her first round of 6-under 66 to be tied third after the second round at the Andalucía Costa del Sol Open de España, here.

The Mysuru golfer, who is playing her first full season on the Ladies European Tour, is now 9-under for 36 holes and trails leader Carlota Ciganda (67-66) who is 11-under.

Pranavi is tied third with Helen Briem of Germany who shot 66-69 to be 9-under. Lying second is Pia Babnik of Slovenia, who has had two straight 67s.

She got off to a good start with two birdies in her first three holes before dropping her only shot of the day on the eighth. She later rolled in two more birdies on the ninth and 15th holes.

PHOTO: PTI

"I could have holed a lot more putts than dropped, so hopefully in the next couple of days it will," said the Indian.

"The game was pretty solid, I also didn't give myself as many opportunities as yesterday. I had little mistakes here and there, but that's golf. It was overall a decent day.

De Roey had an eagle, three birdies and a bogey on her scorecard to seal a round of 68 on day two in Malaga. —*PTI*

Day 3 sees Williamson's fifty, England's dominance in 1st Test

CHRISTCHURCH, 30 NOV

Kane Williamson completed his second half-century of the match and passed 9,000 Test runs on Saturday as he led New Zealand's faltering resistance to England's control on the third day of the first Test.

Williamson followed his first innings 93 with 61 and was one of five batsmen to fall before New Zealand erased England's 151-run first innings lead.

At stumps, New Zealand was 155-6, four runs ahead and with only bowlers yet to bat. Daryl Mitchell was 31 not out and Nathan Smith was on one. Brydon Carse had 3-22 and seven wickets for the match.

PHOTO: PTI

England applied Bazball principles to take charge of the match almost from the resumption Saturday, dashing past New Zealand's first innings of 348 and building a commanding first innings lead at almost six runs per over.

Harry Brook resumed at 132 and went on to 171 in a 159-run partnership with Ben Stokes who was 37 not out overnight and finished with 80.

Dashing late contributions from Gus Atkinson who made 48 from 26 balls and Carse who made 33 from 24 with three monstrous sixes piled more pain on New Zealand late in its innings as it made 499 all out. —*PTI*

BENGALURU FC TARGET ODISHA FC'S STRONGHOLD

BHUBANESWAR, 30 NOV

Buoyed by their impressive all-round form, table-toppers Bengaluru FC will hope to breach Odisha FC's 'fortress' when the two sides square off in an Indian Super League (ISL) match at the Kalinga Stadium here on Sunday.

Bengaluru FC have been rolling seamlessly ever since their campaign got going. The entire team has been functioning like a well-drilled unit and hence they are gradually taking the home-away factor out of consideration this year, succeeding across venues. —*PTI*

GEARS UP FOR 2026

Elusive WC medal my goal: Harmanpreet

NEW DELHI, 30 NOV

India men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh has two Olympic bronze medals in his cabinet, but rues missing out on World Cup glory, an anomaly that he wants to set right in the next edition of the mega event in 2026.

India have till date won three World Cup medals -- bronze in 1971 (Barcelona), silver in 1973 (Amstelveen, Netherlands) and gold in 1975 (Kuala Lumpur) under Ajitpal Singh's leadership.

Harmanpreet, who won back-to-back Olympic bronze in Tokyo and Paris, the second one under his leadership, however, had won the Junior World Cup in Lucknow in 2016.

"Our immediate target is next FIH Pro League matches and then win the Asia Cup and qualify directly for the World Cup. A World Cup medal hasn't come for a long time and I want to fulfil that in my career," said Harmanpreet, one the best defenders and drag-flickers of the world right now.

The 2026 men's FIH Hockey World Cup will be the 16th edition of the quadrennial tournament scheduled to be held from 15 to 30 August in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands

Harmanpreet was the toast of the revamped Hockey India League auction recently, bagging Rs 78 lakh bid from Soorma Hockey Club of Punjab.

The HIL will be revived this season after seven years. The franchise-based league will be held in both men's and women's categoory this time.

The men's league will begin on 28 December in Rourkela, with matches continuing through two stages until the final showdown on 1 February, 2025.

The maiden women's league will start from 2 January, 2025 in Ranchi, with their grand finale slated for 26 January —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Jansen takes 11 wickets as SA wins by 233 runs

DURBAN,30 NOV

South Africa wrapped up a 233-run win over Sri Lanka and medium-pacer Marco Jansen finished with 11 wickets in the first test on Saturday.

Sri Lanka was set an improbable 516 target and started the fourth day in a deep hole at 103-5. It was all out for 282, hastened by the dismissal of Dinesh Chandimal, who led the resistance with 83.

After Chandimal was out caught and bowled by Gerald Coetzee, Sri Lanka's last three wickets folded for 11 runs in the next six overs.

Jansen took the last two wickets for 4-73 in the innings and 11-86 in the match for his maiden 10-for in his 14th test.

The second and last test starts on Thursday in Gqeberha. —*PTI*